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OF THE
Shortness
OF
TIME.

By *Francis Fuller, M. A.*

L O N D O N :

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Pall-Mall, 1700.

To the Inhabitants of *Hackney*,
that were under the Ministry
of the Reverend Dr. *Bates*
there.

Solomon tells us, that because to every Purpose there is required Time and Judgment (viz. a proper season, and a special manner of acting, upon the due Observation of which, the success of every good Action depends) therefore the Misery of Man is great upon him. This Misery is not in having a season, but in his not observing it; and becomes greater, then if he had never had one.

The Time and Seasons that you have had are well known to others, but I hope better known to your Selves. You may easily remember the Times when that Reverend Person (now with God) and you kept Holy Day together: How delightful was it to you, to sit under the Shadow of those Ministrations? How pleasant the Fruit, how sweet to your Taste the delicate Provisions prepared there? But how bitter the remembrance that they are past and gone, and how much more bitter should the remembrance be if not improved by you? How sad will it be, if under those influences and

The Preface, &c:

*Dews from on high no better then withered Fruit
should be found under the green Leaves of your
Profession? And how miserable will you be, if
you that have been so long fed with the Fatnesses
of God's House, should be found with Leanness
in your Souls.*

*It was the great Character of the Children of
Issachar (above all other Tribes) that they had
understanding of the Times, and of the Duties
of those Times. But how few of that Tribe are
left upon the Earth, it is almost either wholly wore
out, or but a few left.*

*Now that you may be found in the number
of those few, such as have (with the Wiseman)
Hearts to discern both Time and Judgment, to
know your Day, and the Work of your Day,
your season and the proper business of it ; so wise
as to know it, and so faithful as to do it, is the
design of Publishing this Sermon, and the sin-
cere Desire of*

Your Servant in our Lord,

F. Fuller.

OF

OF THE
SHORTNESS
OF
TIME.

I COR. VII. ix.

The Time is short.

THE Words are the Apostles Argument to the *Corinthians*, and in them to us, to perswade to a moderate Love to, and Use of the Things of the World, from their and our short Continuance here ; they will not continue long, nor we to enjoy

B joy

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joy them: And therefore should not be inordinate in our Love to them.

The Time is short.

(1.) The Time of the Duration of the World, and of the Things of the World is short; so some read it.

(1.) Of the World.

If the Time was short in the Apostles Days, *viz.* That Time which God spread over all things like a Sail, and had been some Thousands of Years rolling up, was then roll'd to the last Corner, and almost ended, it is now

grown shorter by ma-

1 John 2. 18.
Exodus. 1Cor.
10. 11. ny hundred Years, and if the last Time (*viz.* the last Age of the World) was come then, or if that Age was the last Hour; then ours (upon whom the ends of the World are come) is the last Minute of that Hour.

For, the World waxes Old, and is in its Declension; the Heavens are fading, they, and the Tabernacle in them set for the Sun are dissolving:

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The Earth also, and the Works therein, are Perishing, and near their End.

(2.) Of the Things of the World.

The Things of Heaven are set out by the Temple, which was fixt and permanent. The Things of the World are set out by the Tabernacle, which was Transient, they (as the Sun) admit no Changes; these (as the Moon) are liable to them, they please while they last, but last not long; for, they are things that Perish.

(or are to Corruption) Col. 2. 22.
in their Use.

(2.) The Time of our Duration in the World is short, so others (and more properly) read it.

We are Natural, and have our Motion, Beginning and End.

We are Finite, and have our Periods and Bounds; our Bounds in our Durations, as well as in our Dimensions.

And are made of Principles so contrary, at least so corruptible, that we shall certainly (and may speedily) have our End.

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Since then, the Things of the World,
are but an Appearance only.

A Scherme without Solidity.

A Shadow without Substance.

More in Show, then in Reality.

And continue not long in that Appearance,
Terminus Histrio-nicus. but as Scenes in a Play, pass away one after another, and are soon at an End.

And since we walk in a vain Shew,
Psalm 39. 5. and the Time of our Continuance here is short ;
Terminus nauticus, contracted, cut off, trus'd up into a narrow Scantling ; like the Sails of a Ship, which Marriners when near their Port and entering in, strike, fold, furl up, and role together.

Since the best worldly Estates are Vanity, as to their Duration ; and we at the best Estate are Vanity as to ours.

Since they are passing away, and we are passing away (our Days are passed
Psalm 90. 10. Isa. 64. 6.

passed away) since they are fading, and we are fading (we all fade as a Leaf) since they are withering, whilst flourishing; and we dying, whilst living; since we are at such uncertainties for their Continuance or ours, which shall be longest, and as to their End and ours which shall be soonest.

Let us not Love those Things much, which we are not sure to live long to Love; nor to have, if we should.

But sit loose in our Affections to them, while we have them; that we may the more willingly part with them while we Live, or leave them when we Die.

The Nots in the Text (they that weep and rejoice, as if they wept and rejoiced not) are not (as one observes) Negations but Moderations, or Qualifications of our respects to the Things of the World. For,

God has not prohibited all Love to them, but that only which is excessive, and as excessive, vicious.

Nor all delight in them, than he has the use of them, but that only which is inordinate.

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Nor the lawful Possession of them, but only the evil Affection to them.

We may Love them, so we do not over Love them.

We may possess them, so we be not possessed of them.

And may use them, so we do not abuse them, nor our selves in the use of them.

The Words are an entire Proposition in themselves, *viz.*

Doct. That our Time in this World is short.

Time may be consider'd.

(1.) In the more general Sense.

(2.) In the more particular Sense.

Time in the more general Sense, is the Duration of Time.

Time in the more particular Sense, is the Season of Time.

One the length of Time.

The other, the opportunity of Time.

A lit-

A little part of that which is as nothing, they are different things, and express'd by different Words; but both short.

Eccles. 3. 1.
וְיֵשׁ תְּמִימָה
Tempus
tempestivum, Tem-
pus longum, Tem-
pus commodum.

(1.) Time in the common and largest Acceptation is short, absolutely and comparatively consider'd.

(1.) Absolutely consider'd.

The Years of our Life are call'd Days, the Days of our Years as the Chronicles, by some, are term'd the Words of Days, containing the Diaries of them, who liv'd rather a few Days then many Years.

Gen. 47. 9.

And Days (as in the former Translation) without the Addition of Years, yea one Day; are *not the Days of Man short or few?* so some translate it; and the Septuagint closer, *is not the Life of Man upon Earth one Day?* so that our Life is either contracted into one single Day, or at the longest it is a being but of seven Days.

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For, how many Days so ever we Live, they are but those seven Days multiplied, which lessen by Multiplication, and grow short by lengthening; for every Day added to Life, is a Day taken from it.

(2.) Short, comparatively consider'd.

But little in its self, and comparatively nothing, *viz.* To the Time of the Patriarchs, to our Work, to our abode in the Grave, and to Eternity.

(1.) To the Time of the Patriarchs.

Their Time (for the encrease of the World, for the conveighing of the Knowledge of Gods Will

Mathuselah, Sem, and Isaac preserv'd it almost two thousand years.

to it, and for the Preservation of Truth from Corruption in it) was long upon Earth, but ours is much shorter, it sunk with the Flood from Hundreds to Scores, and those but a few.

They (as *Austin* says) serv'd a long Apprenticeship, but we sooner obtain

on

our Freedom; Death's motion was slow
(for it was many hundred Years com-
ing) to them, but it is swift to us, and
soon overtakes us.

(2.) To our Work.

If we calculate the Time of Life for
seventy Years (the number of the Days
of our Years) and take
from it the Time of in- Psalm 90. 10.
fancy and childhood, ig-
norance and irregeneracy, sleep and
recreation, eating and drinking, sick-
ness and old Age, but a very little will
remain for Service; Eternity it self is
little enough to bless God for the Mer-
cies of one Day; how much less then,
is that short Time of our Life for that
great Work we are redeem'd and call'd
to; especially, if we consider how
much miss-spent Time, there is in our
best-spent Time.

(3.) To our abode in the Grave the
place of Darkness, Life is the Day, and
Death the Night; a Winters Day, in
which the Day-light is
short, and the Darkness Eccles. 11. 8.
of the Night long.

(4.) To

(4.) To Eternity.

The Time of our Life compar'd with all Time, is but short, but all Time, (from the beginning of Time to the end of it) compar'd with Eternity (a Duration without end) is as nothing.

It is true, a Moment is more to all that Time that either has been or shall be, then all that Time is to Eternity; for a Moment by Repetition may come up to that Time, but all that Time will never reach Eternity, it being no more to it, than a Minute is to the full Arithmetick of Time; a drop to the Ocean, a spark to the Element of Fire, a sand to the Body of the Earth, or one single Atom to the whole World.

Our Life is a Race, in which we can neither stay nor slacken our Pace; neither stand still nor go back, but forward, and that with full speed.

And therefore compar'd in Scripture to things most Transitory, emphatically setting forth the uncertainty of it, *viz.*

To a Vapour, that is quick in Apparition, and almost is quick in Dissolution

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on, in one Region or another, at the longest but of a Forenoon Continuance.

To a Watch in the Night, that is but of Three (or at the longest but of Four) Hours Psalm 90. 4.

continuance.

To a Shadow, that has no substantial solidity, nor consistency in it, moveable and inconstant, not fixt but passing, and not slow but swift in motion, for it flees.

To a Dream in Sleep. Sleep slips away before we can know what we were doing in it, and a Dream is a Fancy of short being, neither real nor lasting, but of all things most vain and fickle, and gone as soon as we awake.

To an Eagle that hasteth to the Prey, whose flight, as naturally more strong and swift, than the flight of any Fowl in the Air, so most so when hastening to the Prey; for, as it is of the most

James 4. 14.

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most piercing sight to find it, and of the sharpest Appetite to desire it, so it is of the swiftest flight to move to it.

To a Flower of the Field, which is more liable to perishing,
Psalm 103. 15. then a Flower in the Garden as having no Fence about it; but lying open to every Hand to pick, to every Foot to tread upon, and to the Mouth of every Beast to devour it.

To Grass, whether we consider it as Grass in the Field, or on the House-top, both which are mentioned in

Scripture, and show the frailty of it. Grass is

Psalm 90. 6. corruptible, and subject to fading, *viz.* insensibly and variously, either by cold Blasts or scorching Heats, if not eat up in the Field, nor cut

down by the Sithe will Wither of it self, and the Flower of Grass is either

Isaiah 37. 27. nearest the Sithe, or withering when most flourishing, but Grass upon the House-top withers (as the Psalmist tells us) a-

1 Pet. 1. 24.

fore

fore it grows up; Grass in the Field is often eat up as it grows, but Grass on the House-tops withers afore it grows up, incontinently withers, and comes not to ripeness.

All which show that our Life is a speedy Course from one Grave to another, from that of the Womb, to that of the Tomb, a living Death or dying Life, for every Day takes some part of it from us. It is Vanity and of no Duration; if measur'd by length, it is but a Span long, if by breadth it is by the least of that dimension, *viz.* a hands breadth, one of the shortest of all Geometrical Measures.

So short, that *Solomon* that allows a beginning and end to it (*viz. A time to be Born, Eccles. 3. 2. and a time to Die*) takes no notice of its Continuance (*viz. a time to Live*) as if it bore no Date, nor was scarce well begun when ended.

Now

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Now to improve this.

(1.) Do nothing to make this short Time shorter.

(2.) Do what you can to make this short Time long.

(1.) Do nothing to make this short Time shorter.

*Non breves Vitas
acepimus sed feci-
mus. Sen. de Brevit-
vita.*

Either by Acts of Vanity and Folly passing away, hastening away that Time, which has wings and out-flies the

swiftest Creatures.

Or by Acts of intemperance, cutting off the slender Thred of your Life in the midst of your Days, according to the Line and Measure of Nature, that might have been drawn out to a greater length, as a Weaver cuts off the Web from the Loom before it is finish'd.

Or by Acts of Violence upon yourselves, putting an end to a sinful Life with Sin, and finishing the Course of Nature by a Sin against Nature.

Or by Acts of Wickedness, provoking

*Isa. 38. 12.
I have cut off like
a Weaver my Life.*

king God to deprive you of the residue of your Years by bringing sudden Destruction upon you, *viz.* not only sudden in it self, but as to your Expectation of, and Preparation for it; for none Die so suddenly, as they that never think of Death, nor prepare for it.

By these you may shorten your Time though not Gods, the Time imagin'd by you, though not numbered by him, and Die before the Time, *viz.* not only that others Eccles. 7. 17. have liv'd, but that you in the ordinary Course of Nature might have liv'd.

(2.) Do what you can to make this short Time long.

It is true, the number of our Months are with God, under his Establishment, and the bounds of our Life by him set, beyond Job 14. 1. which we cannot pass, yet by living apace, and doing much in a little Time, we may make a short Time long.

Abraham is the first (as *Philo* observes) that in Scripture is call'd an old

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old Man and full of Years
Gen. 25. 8. though some before him
liv'd three Times as long.

And the Young Man excluded from
Aristotles Ethick Lectures, was call'd
Young, not from the Paucity of his
Years, but from the vitiouſneſſ of his
Actions.

To Note, that our Manhood is to
be measur'd more by the goodness of
Life, than the length of it.

Alexander reckon'd his Life, not by
Years, but by the Battels fought, and
Victories obtain'd.

Samelus the Philosopher dated his
Life, not from the beginning of the
feventy Years that he liv'd, but from
the seven last Years only that he liv'd
ſtudiously.

And ſo muſt we reckon ours, not
from the number of our Years, but
from the Nature (the goodness) of
our Actions in them.

If our Lives are fill'd up with Good,
we are Old though not full of Years,
but if they are not, though old and
full of Years, yet we are but an infant
of

of Days, for we begin not to Live until we Live *Isa. 65. 20.* well, and Live no longer than we Live so: And how short a Time so ever it is that we Live, if we have liv'd *solus sapiens longaevus.* so, we have liv'd long; it is sad to be Men in Sin before Men in Age, but worse to be as old in Sin as in Years: Now that we may make a short Time long.

(1.) We must Watch against all those things that will (unless watch't) fitch and steal away our Time.

(2.) We must fill up our Time with the proper Work of Time.

(1.) We must Watch against all those things that will (unless watch't) steal away our Time.

Time eats up all things, and there are many things that eat up our Time, devour *Tempus edax rerum.* that Devourer, *viz.*

Inordinate Cares.

Vain Attires.

Excessive Recreations.

Immoderate pampering of our Bodies by Meats, Drinks, and Sleep. C Idle-

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Idleness.

Vain Thoughts.

And Evil Company.

(1.) **Inordinate Cares.** A Care of Providence to provide for our selves, a Care of Prudence to dispose of our Affairs to the best Advantage, and a Care of Diligence in the use of Means, for both are allow'd and enjoy'd, but all diffident and distracting Cares are forbid; they will waste our Time, and our Spirits; and therefore must not indulge our selves in them, but whilst diligent in the use of means, leave the success of all to God who careth for us; to us belongs the Industry, to him the Care; to him the burden of Care, to us the Duty of it.

(2.) **Vain Attires.** *Pambus* wept when he saw a Harlot spending much Time in adorning her Body, as one that took more Pains to please a wanton Lover, than he had to please God; and spent more time to damn her Soul, than he had to save his.

And so may all with shame and sorrow reflect upon themselves, who spend more

more Time in decking their Bodies, than in adorning their Souls, which are not less defil'd by Sin, than their Bodies are deform'd by it; nor their worser but better Part; and therefore should have the first and greatest Care: It is prodigious Folly to damn the Soul, to please the Body.

(3.) Excessive Recreations. All look for Pleasure in Life, and think there is no Life without it, but if it is below a Man (as the *Heathen* says) to Live one whole Day in Pleasure, it is much more below a Christian; and therefore we must not (with *Artoxenus*) live always among Musick, nor make Recreation our Work; but use it only as a help to better things. Our greatest Pleasure should be to despise those Pleasures, and our greatest delight not overmuch to delight in them.

(4.) Immoderate pampering and indulging out Bodies by Meats, ^{By Meats and} Drinks, and Sleep. He was esteem'd the most accomplish'd Man with the *Heathen*, that spent more Oil in the Lamp, then

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Wine in the Bottle ; and they are the wisest among Christians, not that live to eat as *Sensualists* do, but that eat (as *Socrates* said he did) to live, and not barely to live, but to live to him that is **Lord of Life**. Other Lords are but Lords of the Labours of their Servants, but he is Lord of the Lives of his.

By Sleep. There are many that are asleep when awake (their Souls are asleep in their Bodies) and many that spend half their Time in it, but we must not do so ; and therefore must cut short our Sleep (that long Parenthesis of our Thoughts) and with *David* prevent

Psalm 119. 62.

147, 148.

It was the Ancient Opinion of the Hebrews, that the Angels did every Morning sing praise to God, and thus expound those Words, the Pillar of the Morning ascends, let me be gone, for the Time approaches when the Angels are to sing.

the Night Watches, to meditate on God and his Law ; and (with him prevent the dawning of the Morning, by saying to our drowsie Souls (as the Angel to *Jacob*) the Day breaks, and we must be gone for the Time to Praise God is come, I will sing aloud of thy Mercy in the Morning.

(5.) Idle-

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(5.) Idleness: We have no idle days nor hours allow'd us; for Day and Night (the time set for Meditation on God's Law) includes the whole compass of time, and should be employ'd in it.

God will reckon with us at last for our Idleness, as well as for our Work; and for our idle Actions, as well as our idle Words.

Maxima pars debetur & studio minor cibo minima somno, nulla otio.

Reddenda est ratio otii ut negotii.

(6.) Vain Thoughts. Sinful Thoughts indulg'd will damn, though we had neither Tongues to speak against God, nor Hands to Act against him, these like unwelcome Guests will thrust themselves in upon us, but must be thrust out, and not suffer'd to lodge within us, for they are vagrants, and will prove great Wasters Jer. 4. 14. of our Time.

(7.) Evil Company. It is true, we cannot wholly avoid their Company while on Earth; nor is it our Duty, for, Charity at all Times does, and necessity at some times may oblige, us to a

common and general, to a natural and civil, but neither at any Time to a dear and special, to a familiar and sinful Society with them; none ever got any Good (but some much Evil) by bad Company; and therefore, if we would not be like them, we must not unnecessarily Converse, much less Sin with them: It is best to be with them in Time, that we would Live with in Eternity.

These are some of those Thieves that if not look'd to, will take our Time away from us; and therefore must be narrowly watcht, that they may not.

(2.) We must fill up our Time with the proper Work of Time.

Some spend most of their Time in contriving how to spend it, Time lies on their Hands, and they know not how to get rid of it; and therefore ask what they shall do to pass it away.

A thing that would have been ill spoken (as one says) by *Mathuselab* in the nine hundred and sixty ninth Year of his Life, and no less by them, who have so much Work, and so little Time for

for it; who may, if they are to seek how to do it, be directed by the Apostle, *viz.* *To pass the Time of their sojourning here, in* ^{1 Pet. 1. 17.} every part and turning of it with God and Men, *in fear*; not in the sinful slavish fear of Men, but in the Reverential Holy Fear of God.

Now Time is their Burden, and at Death the want of it will be their greater Burden; now they think they have too much, and then they will find they have too little; now they do not know what to do with it, and then they will not know what to do for want of it. Now they put it away from them, and then they would, if they could, recall, and bring it back again.

And some there are that trifle away their Time. As *Domitian* did his in catching Flies. *Sardanapalus* his in Spinning. *Caligula* and others, with a numerous train of Idle retainers, theirs in gathering Cockles and picking up Pebbles; and are scarce ever so well employ'd as *Protigenes*, who (as some tell us) was seven Years Painting a Man and his Dog.

Seneca laugh'd at the Jews (though without Cause) for losing the seventh Part of their Time, by resting every seventh Day from Labour ; but they are more to be blam'd, who lose all their Time, spend all their seven Days in Sin and Folly ; making their Life, that is a Tale for Brevity, as a Tale for Vanity ; either in doing nothing, or that which is worse than nothing ; now if they are to be blam'd, who speak not to the Purpose, than surely they are much more worthy of it, who live not so. But our Duty it is, and therefore our Wisdom it will be to fill up our Time with the proper Work of Time.

There is no *Vacuum* in Time, for it will be fill'd up with Good or Evil, let it be with Good, *viz.* in spending a Temporal Life, about that which is better than Life ; about the things of an Eternal Life, while in Time laying hold on Eternal Life, and doing that in Time for which we were brought into Time ; and for which Time was given us, that which can never be done but in Time, that which can never be done

done in Time, either too soon, or too well ; that which we will wish we had done when going out of Time, and that which will be an Honour as well as a Comfort to us, when gone out of Time into Eternity.

This short Time of our Life is our working Time, our only Time for Work, all the Time we shall have for it.

There was no offering under the Law, when the Sun was set, nor any Time left for Work when the Sun of our Life is gone down ; none in the Grave, whither we are going.

Life is the only Day, and the present Time, the best Hour of the Day. How much of this Time we have lost by standing idle in the Market, when we should have been at Labour in the Vineyard, we may (and we should do well if we would) call to Mind.

Anselm's Life appear'd to him, as having nothing in it but Sin and unprofitableness, and so may ours to us.

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*Aut peccatum, Aut
sterilitas.*

Life was Spent in Sin and Vanity.

1 Pet. 4. 3.
Rom. 6. 19.
*An as of Propor-
tion.*

The Time was (and we may easily Remem-
ber it) when our whole

Now then let that Time past suffice, as e-
nough more than e-
nough for it, and let us Proportion our present
and future Diligence to our former
sloth and idleness ; paying God the
same, in kind or value, that we have
with held from him : and giving him
the same measure, Sin and the World
have had.

Scholars, get up the Time lost in the
Day, by Study at Night.

Servants, that over Sleep themselves,
Work the harder when up.

Travellers, that stay long in their
Inn, Ride the faster when gone.

And so must we make up our former
Negligence, by a future Diligence ;
recover the Ground (in our Rac :) we
lost at our first starting, by our great-
er Speed in it, do as much for God as
we have done against him. In Equity,
God

God should have more (for all our Time is His) but he will not accept of less. And had we spent all our Time in his Service, from the first Moment we were capable of it, we could not have over done, done enough, or too much for him, who has done so much for us.

The First Born of all was Gods.

And Time, the First Born of the Creation is his by all the Right imaginable. But Lent to us, committed in Trust to us, to be laid out in his Service to his Honour, and we cannot be too Diligent in it ; if we consider, that Time is precious, short, passing, uncertain, irrevocable when gone, and that for which we must be accountable.

(I.) Precious. With respect to the Advantages that comes in by it of doing Good. Time in its self is no way Advantageous to any, but it brings Advantages with it ; without Time we can do nothing, but with it we may (if we are Wise) do great Things ; and upon this Account there is no Loss (as the Philosopher says) to

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Homini Scienti, to the loss of Time to
Homini rem mag- him that rightly under-
nam affectanti. stands the Worth of it.

And partly with respect to Eternity, that depends upon it.

We are Junior to Time and may out-live it, and after Death (which ends our Days, but not our Lives) shall enter upon a Life we shall never out-live ; and though Time never enter'd into Eternity, yet we shall enter into it when we go out of Time ; and as we liv'd here in Time, shall be happy or miserable in Eternity.

(2.) Short. Time is short at the longest, and we are daily hovering betwixt that and Eternity ; and therefore, the shorter it is, the Swifter should our Motion in it be ; like the

Birds (as they tell us) *in Norway.* where the days are shortest, are (thro' instinct of Nature) of the swiftest Flight.

A Wisdom we may learn, not only from the Men of the World, whose Diligence is by so much the greater, as their Time grows shorter : But from the

Devil

Devil himself, who is Rev. 12. 2. said, *to come down in great wrath*, when his time is short ; fullest of Rage then when his Commission is to be call'd in, like bad Tenants that make strip and waste when to be turn'd out.

(3.) *Passing* : Time past was, but is not now ; Time present is, but shall not be ; for it is passing as fast as the Heavens can turn about Day and Night, and the Earth upon its own *Axis*. The Sun, that is the Measure of Time, has stood still, and gone back in the Horizon ; but *neither of them* has Time ever done, but goes forward with speed : Many ways are invented to pass away Time ; but none were ever yet found out to stay it.

(4.) *Uncertain* : That part of Time which is gone, is nothing ; and that which we may think is to come, is uncertain ; that which is past is not now, and the other is not yet ; that cannot be recall'd, nor this secur'd.

Hezekiah indeed had a sense of *fifteen years* added to his Life (added, not to what God had determin'd, but to what he

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he threatned) but we have none to ours, and therefore cannot tell how long we shall live, nor how soon we may die: It may be within a few Years (as Job said Job 16. 22. Luke 12.20. Hos.10.15. 1 Sam. 28.19. of himself) within a Month (as was threatned to *Israel* ; this Night (as happen'd to the Rich Man) in the Morning (as was threatned to the King of *Israel*) or to Morrow, as was said to *Saul*.

Yesterday is past, *to Morrow* may be our Wo, and therefore since we know not what shall be on the Morrow, it will be our Wisdom not to know what *to Morrow* means, but *to day* to do the work of the Day, *James* 4.14.

(5.) Irrevocable when past and gone: The Sun returns every day, and the Moons of the Year in their Course; but Time never returns; some losses in Time may be repair'd, but Time it self, when gone, can never be recall'd: No Year of Revolution (as *Plato* and *Zeno* thought) no returning back when gone hence, either to do what was omitted, or mend what was amiss. A Consideration that ought to make us Good-Husbands of our

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our Time, and highly to prize it, as we do things, *Cujus unius honesta avaritia est, Seneca.* which when once gone, can be had no more. It will be too late to think of *redeeming our Time*, when gone into *Eternity*; and therefore should leave nothing undone in Time, but what we would have undone to all *Eternity*.

(6) That for which we must be accountable. God the Father of *Eternity*, is Lord of *Time*: By his Power we were brought into Time, and by his Providence have been preserv'd in it; he might as soon as we were brought forth into Time, have sent us back into a miserable *Eternity*; But as he at first gave us our Time, so he has ever since continu'd us in it; yet it is not so much given as lent, and will be call'd for again.

It was his before ours, and is now his more than ours; ours for Use, but his for Improvement, and for which he will reckon with us to a Moment; and when the Reckoning shall be brought in, and the *Items* for so many years spent in unrepented Sin and Vanity read, the Bill cast.

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up, and the Sum set down what Time ill-spent will cost, it will grieve us to the heart that ever we call'd-in so fast, and make us in anguish of Soul to wish, that either Time had never been to us, or that we might never more be either in Time, or in Eternity.

Time is the best Inheritance, and cannot be Redeemed too dear. And every ones Talent, more or less, and therefore should be every ones Care to Improve, *viz.* of Rich and Poor, Old and Young.

Of the Rich, They may think they've something else to do, but can have nothing of such Concernment as this; and therefore should Contract their Business, and not take more Care, nor spend more Time to find a lost Groat than to save a lost Soul.

Of the Poor, who perhaps cannot look back to a lost State to be Redeem'd, yet may to a lost Time, and therefore should not, by being provident for a Moment, neglect an Eternity; nor be more solicitous how to live here, than how or where they shall live, when they shall live here no more.

Of

Of the Old, who by the shaking of their Hands, the dimness of their Eyes, and feebleness of their Knees, may know that Death has taken them by the Hand ; look'd in at the Windows, and shaken the Pillars of their earthly Tabernacle ; and therefore should make what haste they can to improve their Time, for their Sun is past its Meridian, in its Declension, and just a setting, their Day far spent, and the Night at Hand when all their Actions will be out of season.

Of the Young, who being past the danger of Infancy, and not come to the weakness of Age, may think their Time will continue long, but tho Strength is coming, their Time is going.

All hasten alike to Death, but some have a less way to go than others ; there is a dying in Youth as well as in Old Age ; and as the Old cannot live long, so the Young may die soon, and therefore should not delay, nor put off to the Winter of their Age ; but in the Spring-time of their Life, make their Flight to God ; None ever went to Heaven too

D soon,

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soon, and they that come last (or when old) to Hell, will find to their sorrow, they made too much haste thither.

Thus All, by improving Time present, may redeem Time past, and provide for Time to come, or rather, for a happy Eternity.

(2.) Time consider'd in the particular sense, is the season of Time: Time in the largest sense is the space of Time.

Time in the *particular sense*, is the good occasion that falls out in the *space of time*. Time is that in which occasion is, for, as to every *χρονος*, Time there is a Purpose, *Eccles. 3. 1.* *Articulus temporis.* (*viz.* a proper business for it) so to every purpose there is a Time, *viz.* a fit season for it. That part of Time which is the opportunity for Business, that which has in it a special commodiousness, aptness and fitness for it. It is the Meeting of Time and Means together for the accomplishing of it, and ought to be embrac'd and improv'd in order to it. As there are some Duties, (*viz.* such as the glorifying of God, and the saving of our souls) that are not put

off

off to any particular sett-time, but to be concurrent with every Moment of our Time, there being not the least Minute of Time, in which they are not seasonable.

So there are some Duties that are adapted to a particular Part or Season of Time, they for the Season, and the Season for them ; such as consideration and supplication in a day of Adversity, Duties at all times (for we are not Men without the one, nor Christians without the other) but then more especially, then most seasonable, and consequently then most beautiful, every thing, every word, and every work are beautiful in their season, God's works are so then, and so are ours too, for Seasonableness is the Grace of Fruitfulness.

Eccles. 7. 14.
James 5. 13.

Eccles. 3. 11.
Prov. 15. 23.

And as there is a season as to worldly Things (*viz.* as Marts and Markets) for buying and selling to Advantage, so there is a season as to heavenly Things of greater Advantage, which

D 2 God

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God affords to all under the Gospel, for the receiving and doing the greatest Good, and this is the season of Grace so call'd.

(1.) With respect to the outward Administrations of the means of Grace, and the offers of Grace in them.

(2.) With respect to the inward Operations of the Spirit of Grace, in and by those means. Christ is our Agent in Heaven, and the Spirit is his on Earth, and part of his Agency is to quicken Ordinances to us, and us to them ; us by them, and us to them, both as to State, and Frame.

They are a means to Salvation, but without the Concurrence of the Spirit, they will not be an Effectual means thereunto, though Christ himself was the Dispencer of them, as is Evident in the *Jews* who were under the direct Beams of the Sun of Righteousness, and yet were in darkness, black and deform'd (as the *Moors* nearest the Sun) under the shining of that most Glorious Sun of Righteousness. Now this also is short, For if Time is short, then season

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Season, that is but a *particle* of that time, cannot be long. Therefore it is in Scripture called, a *Day*, an *Hour*, and a *Now*.

A Day, the Day is at hand.

An Hour, the Hour is coming. Rom. 13. 12.
A part of Time not John 5. 25.
determined (as the Natural

Day) by the Motion of the Sun round the Heavens, but by the God of Heaven, in whose hands all our Times, both of Nature and Grace are, and to whom only it is known how long, or how short it shall be.

A Now, Now is Salvation nearer; Now turn to the Lord. Not a perpetual *Now* of Eternity that is fixt and permanent, but a transient *now* of Time, that is fluid and ever in Motion. Rom. 13.11.
Joel 2. 12.
Nunc stans,
nunc fluens.

A Day is but a short part of Time; an *Hour* is but a little part of a *Day*. And a *Now* is but a small piece of an *Hour*, the least particle of Time, and is to Time as a Point is to Place, *viz.* indiscernable, indivisible, of no Dimensions, unless imaginable, and rather a Term of Time than a Part of it.

Now to improve this as the other.

(1.) Do nothing to make this short Season shorter.

(2.) Do what you can to make this short Season long.

(1.) Do nothing to make this short Season shorter, as you may by your Contempt and

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Neglect and Contempt of it ; the abuse of this Day will bring the Night, and may, sooner than we are aware of, *viz.* cause the Sun of the Gospel to Set at Noon, and your Light to be withdrawn in the Season thereof, *viz.* then when Amos 8. 9. *ye may most need it, and least expect it, viz.* as little as of the Suns going down at Noon.

(2.) Do what you can to make this short Season long, *viz.* to cause the Sun of the Gospel to stand still, and continue in your Horizon.

(1.) By a diligent Attendance upon it, lying at the Pool, ready to step in at the Season the Angel moves there, *John 5. 4.*

(2.) By a faithful improvement of it, *viz.* to the end for which it was given, and is continued, *viz.* by closing with all the blessed Motions of the Spirit, and making use of the Means of Purging, whilst they continue, lest ye be never purged, but remain filthy still, *viz.* more filthy, and for ever so, and by hearkening to, and coming at God's Call, lest he be deaf to yours, and *mocks when your fear comes,* which will be the height of

Misery ; for as God never mocks at any in their Misery, but to their destruction, so no de-

Ezek. 24. 13.

Rev. 22. 11.

In notes continuation, and augmentation.

Prov. 1. 24, 26,

Deut. 28. 63.

*UW Summo & incredibili laetitia vi-
sus Dei pro omni
irâ ponitur.*

destruction like to that where he delights to destroy.

To have a Season is a great Blessing, but Judgment to know and observe it, and Wisdom to use and improve it is a greater, especially if we consider that this Season is precious, short, passing, uncertain and irrecoverable when lost.

(1.) Precious. A Day. A Day of Life as to us, A Day of Grace as to God. A Day of Salvation, an *acceptable Day*, a *time of love*, a Day of Good-will to Sinners, *Isai. 49.8.*
2 Cor. 6. 2.

Time in the general sense is valuable, but this part of Time is most so, as a Means appointed by God for the mortifying of our Corruptions, and the quickning of our Graces, and without which all the other Time would not be of so great advantage to us, the best part of Time (and sometimes the shortest) the loss of which, Eternity it self is little enough to bewail.

(2.) Short, A Day, and but a day ; a day, that we may labour, and but a Day that we might not loyter.

(3.) Passing : A Day of Grace, not like the Day of Glory, a perpetual Day without Night, shining in its eternal High-Noon, without the least Shadow or Cloud upon it ; but a Day that will have a Night, as well as a Morning and Full Noon.

(4.) Uncertain : *viz.* Both as to the Day
D 4 and

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and the Work of the Spirit in the Day. A Day of Grace that may be shorter than the Day of Nature ; a Time of Love that may be shorter than our Time of Life ; it ever ends with it, but may end before it, and is never longer, but may be shorter.

(5.) Irrecoverable when lost : Such a Day, as when the Night is come, will have no other Day to succeed, but a Day of Vengeance, that will take place of that Day of Patience abused by us.

Now to *Apply* what hath been said, let us consider,

(1.) That we in this Land have had our Season, and you in this Place have had yours ; and such a Season under the Ministrations of that Excellent Person (now with God) when he dwelt among you, and Preacht to you, that perhaps ye may never have more, while ye are in Time.

Judah for this was called *the glorious land, the goodly land, the land of Dan. 11. 16. Ornament* ; and this has been the honour of our Land, and no less of your Town where it has been.

A Signal, and a Distinguishing Mercy.

A Signal Mercy, as the only Means, in an ordinary way, to Salvation ; there being no other way now to be saved, but by the Gospel.

It was *Benjamin's* Glory that God dwelt betwixt his Shoulders, and the Glory of the Ark

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Ark that God sate there between the Cherubims, *Psalm 63. 2.*

The Temple was the Glory of *Jerusalem*, and the Ark was the Glory of *Israel*, yea the Glory of God, the Beauty of his Ornament, and therefore may well be reckoned ours; for as a Note of Dignity and Excellency, it is called, an exalting that place where it is, up to Heaven, *Ezek. 7.20. Luke 10.15.*

A distinguishing Mercy, as the fruit, not of common Bounty, but of special Love, and as to some, and not to all, *Psal. 97.18,19.*

How many sit in darkness (and worse than *Egyptian Darkness*) in the shadow of death, whom the *Day-spring from on high* hath not visited, to give Light, (the knowledge of Salvation) to, whilst we are in a *Goshen*, a Land of glorious light, *Luke 2. 77,78,76.*

A People as good by Nature as any of us, and who, perhaps, would have made a better improvement of such a Season, if they had had it, than we have done.

God might have afforded it to them, as well as to us, to them, and not to us; but since it is to us, and not to them, it calls for Thankfulness from us, the least Mercy from God, should be thankfully receiv'd, and faithfully improved by us, much more this, and most of all, when a distinguishing Mercy, *viz.* to some, and not to all, to us, and not to others.

(2.) We have not only had our Season, but have

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have had it a long while, it has been, and yet is.

Some never had a Season, and some not so long as we. With many God has cut short his work, made an offer of Mercy, and when not accepted, has gone away, and return'd no more, but sent them to Hell, to bewail their Folly without Hope ; but he has not dealt so with us, but has bore with our evil Manners many a Year. Our Season has been long, our Day of Grace has been as long as our Day of Nature. And our Season yet is, it has not a Night yet drawn over it.

(3.) Our Season may not be much longer, *now is the day of Salvation*, the next may be the day of Damnation. This the day of *patience*, the next may be the day of *vengeance*, the *acceptable year of the Lord*, and the day of *God's vengeance*, stand close together, *Isa. 61.3.*

Its true, the Gospel shall, in its Ordinances and Administrations, continue in the World to the end of it (*Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation*, *Joel 3. 20.*) but it is not secur'd to any particular place so long, nor to any at all that reject it.

There are Vicissitudes in the Kingdom of God, as well as in the Kingdoms of Men. *Bethel*, once the House of God, became *Bethaven*, a *house of vanity*, and *Jerusalem*, the *valley of Vision*, and *joy of the whole earth*, became a *Valley of Tears, lamented of men*. The Kingdom of Grace is not as the Kingdom of Glory, a Kingdom that cannot be shaken, but may,

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may, and be taken away (as it was from the *Jews*) and given (as it was to the *Gentiles*) to a Nation bringing forth the fruits thereof, and their fruits in their proper Season. *Acts 13. 46. Psal. 13.*

Now our Pillars are not stronger than those on which former Churches stood.

Nor have we such a Lease of the Gospel, as cannot be forfeited by our Sins. When the Ark stood in the Temple, there were Staves there to carry it away. *Exod. 12. 14.*

(4.) The season when past and gone, may never be recovered, *Go to Shiloh and see what I did there*; the Ark that continued three hundred Years in *Shiloh*, when carried away, never return'd more, to *Israel* it did, but not to *Shiloh*, *Jer. 7. 12, 14.*

(5.) The greater our season has been if not improv'd, the greater will our Sin, and consequently our Condemnation for it be. The Sin will be more heinous. And the Punishment more grievous.

(1.) The Sin more heinous. To Sin against the Twilight of Nature is provoking, but more against the Noon-light of the Gospel. It was this that aggravated the Sin of *Capernaum* beyond that of *Sodom*, (though there were no unclean *Sodomites* in it) and made the Sin of the *Jews* so great as not to admit of an excuse, had it not been for this they had no Sin, not simply none, but comparatively none, to what else they would have had, and will ours greater than the Sin of the Devils, to whom a season of Grace was never given, nor a tender of Mercy ever made.

(2.) The Punishment will be the more dreadful. Great Salvation neglected will bring great Damnation; for, that which brings the greatest Curse is a Blessing refus'd, it has more of the Nature of Sin in it, and will have more of the Effects of it in the severer Vengeance for it. It was this, that Christ tells us would make the Condemnation of *Capernaum, Chorazin and Bethsaida*, less tolerable or more intolerable than that of *Tyre and Sidon*, viz. because of the mighty Works done there, there were greater Sins committed in the

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the one, but there were greater Works done in the other, and from this their Sins would be the more highly aggravated, and consequently the more severely Punish'd, *Math. 11. 20. Luke 10. 13.*

So that if we are not diligent to improve the Seasons we have, it would have been better for us that we had never had them; for the Time may come when we may wish we had been *Heathens* rather than Christians, and Citizens of *Sodom* rather then of *Zion*.

(6.) The neglect of Seasons, is one great part of the torment of the Damned in Hell.

The gnawing of the never dying Worm is the enraged and furious Reflection of the Soul upon it self, with the gnashing of Teeth out of Indignation against themselves, at the remembrance of those Seasons they once had in their Hands, but no Hearts to improve them; but now lost, and not to be recover'd.

What would not they give (if they had it) that are in that Ocean of Misery, for a Shore to land in? How would they rejoice, were a Proclamation made at Hell Gates for their Release? Might Time be once more, or a Voice call to them to come out, and live over their Lives again.

Let us then, while in Time, act like Men of Wisdom, such as understand the Times and Seasons, and what ought to be done in them; that we may do nothing in Time that will be matter of Sorrow to us here, nor of everlasting Sorrow in Eternity: But so live, as that we may look back to Time past, and forward to Eternity with comfort when dying; as going from this present State, where Time, and all the glory of it, is passing away, into an Everlasting State, where Time passeth not at all, nor any of the Glory of that State shall ever pass away.

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